

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU

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INFO AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

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E.O. 11652 N/A

TAGS: PFOR, NP, IN

SUBJ: INDO-NEPAL RELATIONS WORSEN

1. PRIME MINISTER GIRI IN THE COURSE OF A PRESS CONFERENCE MAY 24 UNLEASH A LENGTHY AND VIRIOLOC CONDEMNATION OF INDIAN INTERFERENCE IN NEPALESE INTERNAL AFFAIRS. REFFERING TO THE CURRENT SPATE OF NEWS STORIES AND STATEMENTS BY PUBLIC FIGURES IN INDIA (ON KOIRALA ISSUE IN PARTICULAR AND THE ABASNCE OF DEMOCRATIC PROCESSES IN NEPAL IN GENERAL), HE ASSERTED THAT SUCH "CONCERN OVER MATTERS WHOLLY WITHIN NEPAL'S DEOMESTIC JURISDICTION IS MORE THAN ANY SELF-RESPECTING

NATION CAN TOLERATE." HE ACCUSED THE INDIAN PRESS OF "RECOURSE TO OUTRIGHT LIES AND OF MALIGNING THE MOST SACRED INSTITUTION OF THE COUNTRY - THE MONARCHY" AND WENT ON TO INDICT THE OFFICIAL ALL-INDIA RADIO FOR BROADCASTING "INCREDIBLE, UTTER FALSEHOOD AS HARD NEWS, KNOWING THAT IT WAS PREJUDICAL TO THE RELATIONS BETWEEN NEPAL AND INDIA." HE ALSO COMPLAINED THAT "NEW DELHI TV PROVIDED LIVE COVERAGE FOR A PRESS STATEMENT BY A MAN AGAINST WHOM THERE ARE CRIMINAL CHARGES IN THIS COUNTRY, ALLOWING HIM TO GIVE FREE VENT TO HIS VIEWS." HE CONTINUED IN THIS VEIN AT LENGTH, WARNING OF THE EFFECT SUCH PROPAGANDA COULD HAVE ON INDO-NEPAL RELATIONS, CAUTIONING AGAINST THE ATTEMPT TO CREATE A WEDGE BETWEEN THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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KING AND THE PEOPLE", AND PROMISING THAT THE "FREEDOM LOVING NEPALESE WOULD FACE UP TO THIS CHALLENGE." HE ALSO CRYPRICALLY OBSERVED THAT "NEPAL TODAY HAS MORE FRIENDS THAN IN 1960."

2. GIRI WAS NOT OVERLY CAREFUL ABOUT DISTINGUISHING BETWEEN OFFICIAL AND UNOFFICAL INDIAN PARTIES TO THE ANTI-NEPAL CAMPAIGN. HE EXPLICITLY NOTED THE "OFFICIAL" NATURE OF THE AIR INDIA AND

TV BROADCAST FACILITIES, AND IDENTIFIED THE CONCERNED INDIAN LEADERS AS "MEMBERS OF THE ERSWHILE SOCIALIST PARTY OF INDIA." HE NOTED THAT THE ISSUE IS NOT A NEW ONE, BUT THAT "WE HAVE BEEN FACED WITH THIS CALLENGE SINCE 1960, SINCE THE INCEPTION OF PANCHAYAT DEMOCRACY." WHEN ASKED WHETHER THE INDIAN GOVERNMENT WAS ABBETING THE PROPAGANDA CAMPAIGN, HE JUST BARELY DODGED THE QUESTION BY REPLYING THAT SUCH UNECESSARY INTERFERENCE SHOULD BE STOPPED IMMEDIATELY IN THE LARGER INTEREST OF FRIENDSHIP BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES. IN REPLY TO ANOTHER QUESTION HE OBSERVED THAT INDIAN FOREIGN MINISTER VAJPAYEE'S RECENT STATEMENT ON ON-INTEFERENCE SEEMED TO HAVE HAD NO EFFECT, AND COMMENTED THAT " PERHAPS MR. VAJPAYEE IS HELPLESS." HE SAID THAT GOI'S RESPONSES TO FORMAL GON PROTESTS CONSISTED OF PLEAS OF LACK OF INFORATION" OR RECOURSE TO "RITUA"EXCUSES ABOUT FREEDOM OF THE PRESS.

3. EVIDENTLY COOLING OFF SOMEWHAT DURING THE QUESTION AND ANSWER PERIOD, GIRI FOLLOWED UP HIS TIRADE WITH A MILD ATTEMPT AT AN UP-BEAT NOTE. HE OBSERVED THAT THERE ARE ALSO AREAS OF AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES, BUT THAT THESES AREAS DO NOT RECEIVE THEIR FAIR SHARE OF ATTENTION. HE POINTED OUT THAT TE TRADE AND TRANSIT DISCUSSIONS WERE CONTINUING, AND THAT TRADE RELATIONS BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES CONTINUED TO BE NORMAL. WHEN ASKED TO ELABORATE ON HIS STATEMENT THAT "WE HAVE MORE FRIENDS" HE DODGED BY OBSERVING THAT INDIA ALSO IS ONE OF NEPAL'S OLD FRIENDS.

4. IN A DEFENSIVE NOTE, GIRI ENDED THE PRESS CONFERENCE WITH THE OBSERVATION THAT ALTHOUGH "THE PRESENT (PANCHAYAT) SYSTEM IS BEST LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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SUITED TO OUR PEOPLE, "THERE IS ALWAYS ROOM IN IT FOR REFORM AS EXEMPLIFIED BY HIS MAJESTY'S RECENT DIRECTIVES TO THE BACK-TO-VILLAGE CAMPAIGN" (I.E., THE BACKING AWAY FROM "CONSENSUS ELECTIONS.")

COMMENT:WHEN THE CHARGE WAS SPEAKING TO FOREIGN SECRETARY BHATT ON ANOTHER MATTER JUST BEFORE THE PRIME MINISTER'S STATEMENTS, BHATT ALLUDED TO THE UPCOMING PRESS CONFERENCE AND SUGGESTED THAT THE PRIME MINISTER'S REMARKS ON INDO-NEPALI RELATIONS WERE PERHAPS LARGELY TRIGGERED BY G.P. KOIRALA'S ANNOUNCED PLANS FOR ORGANIZING DEMONSTRATIONS IN NEPALAND BY THE IMPLICIT SUPPORT WHICH ALL INDIA RADIO AND TELEVISION COVERAGE OF G.P. KOIRALA'S STATEMENTS SEEMS TO INVOLVE, IN THE GON'S EYES. INDIAN EMBASSY OFFICERS HERE TELL US THEY CONSIDER THAT GIRI HAS "OVERREACTED" BUT DOUBT THAT HE DID SO WITHOUT ADVANCE CLEARANCE FROM THE PALACE. EAVES

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